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For more information contact: Larry Siems, PEN American Center, (646) 359-0594, [lsiems@pen.org](mailto:lsiems@pen.org)

Yu Zhang, Independent Chinese PEN Center, +46-8-50022792, [wipc@penchinese.net](mailto:wipc@penchinese.net)

**FOR INTERVIEWS IN BEIJING:**

ZHANG Zuhua: 86-10-88286106

JIANG Qisheng: 86-10-68903590

LIU Xiaobo: 86-10-88511820

## **Chinese Police Preventing Prominent Chinese Writers from Meeting in Beijing**

### **Two Detained, Dozens More Under Guard Throughout City**

#### **Actions Target Chinese Members of PEN, the International Writers Organization, and Other Independent Writers and Supporters Planning Gathering for Saturday Evening**

Beijing, New York, December 21, 2007 – Chinese police have detained two writers and issued warnings and posted guards outside the homes of dozens of others to prevent the Independent Chinese PEN Center from holding an informal awards dinner tomorrow night in Beijing. Authorities have forced the hotel where the event was to take place to cancel the event and warned all invitees and dozens of their colleagues and supporters throughout the country against appearing for the dinner. Police guarding the homes of many members of the PEN Center and others who were planning to attend the event will reportedly remain on guard through the weekend, and the two detained writers, one a leader of the organization and the other a scheduled honoree at the event, are still in police custody.

The dramatic events began last week, when prominent members of the Independent Chinese PEN Center (ICPC) in several cities reported heightened police scrutiny. Shanghai writer, activist and prominent ICPC member Li Jianhong (aka Xiao Qiao) was placed under house arrest on December 14. The following

day she and her father were taken first to the police station and then, in a practice common in Chinese law enforcement, to a hotel, where they are still being detained. Li, who was to receive this year's Lin Zhao Memorial Award, was reportedly informed that she had been arrested at the request of the Beijing Police Security Bureau's National Security Unit. She was told she will remain in detention until December 25 and that police were determined to prevent the dinner from taking place.

Today in Beijing, police fanned out across the city to do just that. The evening's other scheduled honoree, renowned poet and 2007 Freedom to Write Award honoree Liao Yiwu, was detained this afternoon and interrogated until police officers from his home city of Chengdu arrived to assume custody; they will be escorting him back to Chengdu tomorrow. Meanwhile, police guards began appearing at the homes of dinner organizers and invitees, many of whom also received phone calls warning them not to attend the program.

The Independent Chinese PEN Center has a membership of around 200 Chinese writers both inside and outside of China, including many prominent dissidents. It was formed in 2001 and has operated under close official scrutiny ever since. In 2004 it held its first awards ceremony in Beijing to honor outstanding literary writers and defenders of freedom of expression. Authorities warned the center against holding such an official event in the future, so the following year the center hosted an informal awards dinner which was allowed to proceed under the watchful eyes of police. This year, however, a decision has clearly been made to block the event, which was to include leading writers and prominent human rights lawyers who have defended dissident writers, a move an ICPC representative suggests may be tied to increased pressure to suppress dissident activity in advance of next summer's Beijing Olympics.

Members of the Independent Chinese PEN Center reacted with shock and outrage to the events. "The freedom we are pursuing can never be blocked by any police operation," Zheng Yi, the President of ICPC, said defiantly today.

**THE FOLLOWING RELEASE WAS ISSUED TODAY BY THE INDEPENDENT CHINESE PEN CENTER**

For more information contact ICPC Secretary-General Dr. Yu Zhang in Sweden at +46-8-50022792.

For direct contacts and interviews with parties in Beijing:

ZHANG Zuhua: 86-10-88286106

JIANG Qisheng: 86-10-68903590

LIU Xiaobo: 86-10-88511820

## **Independent Chinese PEN Center Condemns the Chinese Police's Crackdown on Upcoming Dinner in Beijing**

Dinner parties have been a PEN tradition since the international writers organization was founded in London 86 years ago, but its Beijing branch is not being allowed to hold an informal literary awards dinner party scheduled for tomorrow night.

“In an era when totalitarian ideology is in decline, a nationwide police operation on such a large scale targeting writers seems almost inconceivable. The freedom we are pursuing can never be blocked by any police operation!” said Mr. ZHENG Yi, President of the Independent Chinese PEN Center (ICPC), today in Washington, DC.

Independent Chinese PEN Center had planned to host an informal dinner party for the coming New Year in Beijing. About 50 individuals, including ICPC members and some prominent intellectuals, were invited to the dinner booked for 17:00 on December 22 at Beijing's Xin Kai Yuan Hotel. ICPC was to take this opportunity to issue its 2007 Fifth Freedom to Write Award and Third Lin Zhao Memorial Award.

About 16:00 today, the Beijing police arrived at the respective homes of two leading ICPC members, Dr. JIANG Qisheng, the Vice-president, and Dr. LIU Xiaobo, a Board member and the former President, and warned them not to attend the dinner. Moreover, the policemen started guarding at the gates of their resident buildings, evidently to prevent them from going out the next day.

Almost at the same time, many other presumed dinner invitees were also warned and/or blocked at home by the police in the different regions of Beijing. They include Mr. XU Liangying, a prominent scientist and writer over 80 years old, Dr. ZHANG Zuhua, a constitutional scholar, Mr. WANG Lixiong, the recipient of ICPC's First Freedom to Write Award, Ms. JIA Jianying, the wife of imprisoned writer Mr. HE Depu, Miss LIU Di, Mr. QI Zhiyong, Mr. LI Hai, and many others.

Ms JIA and several others had not even heard of the dinner party.

Mr. LIAO Yiwu, the renowned poet and this year's scheduled recipient of the Freedom to Write Award, arrived in Beijing some days ago, but at 13:40 today he was summoned to the police station in the area where he has been staying. He was threatened and held there for interrogation until 16:00 when three policemen from Chengdu, his home city in Sichuan Province, arrived to take him back to Chengdu tomorrow afternoon.

A few days ago, several of ICPC members in various cities had already been hindered from traveling to Beijing by local police with the warnings and even house arrest.

In Shanghai, Miss LI Jianhong (aka Xiao Qiao), this year's recipient of Lin Zhao Memorial Award, had been under house-arrest at home since December 14 and has been detained in a hotel since December 19. Mr. JIANG Danwen, ICPC Deputy Secretary-general, was warned not to leave for Beijing a few days ago and today was summoned to have tea with the police tomorrow.

Those warned also included Mr. ZHAO Dagong, an ICPC Board member in Shenzhen, Mr. QIN Gen in Haikou, Mr. WEN Kejian in Hangzhou, and several others, whether or not they had planned to go to Beijing.

Mr. SUN Wenguang, an ICPC member over 70 years of age, was scheduled to arrive in Beijing by train from Jinan at 15:00 today but has lost contact with others, and it is feared he was taken into custody by the police upon his arrival.

Dr. JIANG and Dr. LIU expressed their anger at the police actions.

“As the Beijing Olympics is getting nearer by the day, the human rights issue has been receiving more and more attention, and the world is watching to see whether or not the Chinese authorities will keep the promise they made when Beijing applied to host the Games to improve human rights in our country. However, the police prohibition of ICPC's dinner party calls that promise into question. The action has no legal basis, it is contrary to reasons given by the police, and it goes against the way of the world. China has once again turned so-called 'Olympic Human Rights' into an empty slogan and hypocritical cheat to the international community.”

“That such a powerful regime is afraid of the gathering of a few literati suggests that it is really weak to the extreme!” said Mr. LIAO Yiwu.